DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 142 328 PS 009 494

AUTHOR Szczepanski, Jan
TITLE The Role of Family and Kindergarten in the Child's Socialization Process.
INSTITUTION Organisation Mondiale Pour l'Education Prescolaire, Warsaw (Poland).
PUB DATE Aug 77
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Annual World Congress of OMEP (15th, Warsaw, Poland, August 23-26, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Early Childhood Education; Early Experience; *Family Influence; Family Role; Family School Relationship; *Foreign Countries; *Kindergarten; Parent Participation; Preschool Children; *Preschool Education; Social Development; *Socialization
IDENTIFIERS *Poland; World Congress on Preschool Education

ABSTRACT

This speech, presented at the 1977 meeting of the World Organization for Preschool Education (OMEP), discusses the early socialization of children and the importance of learning experiences that take place in the family situation. A brief historical overview of Polish kindergartens is presented. Socialization in the family is seen as a deciding factor in the child's success or failure in later socialization situations. It is proposed that the child's manner of acquiring knowledge, values and attitudinal patterns are acquired from the family before entering kindergarten and that kindergarten educators should be aware of family socialization processes. It is suggested that family education be geared toward skills needed in kindergarten. In kindergarten, during organized play, the child learns social cooperation. Special efforts and problems of the Polish kindergarten system are presented. (SB)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED142328

POLSKI KOMITET
ŚWIATOWEJ ORGANIZACJI
WYCHOWANIA PRZEDSZKOLNEGO

ORGANISATION MONDIALE POUR
L'EDUCATION PRÉSCOLAIRE

O M E P

Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dzieci
Zarząd Główny

XV ŚWIATOWY KONGRES OMEP Warszawa 23-26 VIII.1977 r.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

JAN SZCZEPAŃSKI

PS 009494

THE ROLE OF FAMILY AND KINDERGARTEN IN THE CHILD'S SOCIALIZATION PROCESS

Warszawa 1977

JAN SZCZEPAŃSKI

THE ROLE OF FAMILY AND KINDERGARTEN IN THE CHILD'S SOCIALIZATION PROCESS

W a r s a w 1977

Prof.dr hab. Jan Szczepański
Full member of the
Polish Academy of Sciences
Vice-President of the
Polish Academy of Sciences
Warsaw, Poland

THE ROLE OF FAMILY AND KINDERGARTEN IN THE CHILD'S SOCIALIZATION PROCESS

Introduction

15th OMEP Congress chose as the subject of its sessions a very general phrase "In the greatest benefit of the child" meaning the whole set of problems concerning the child from birth to school entrance. In this period of life in our civilization everything that concerns the child is formed as a result of influences exerted by several institutions, i.e. family, health and social services, creche, kindergarten, the local and neighbouring community in which the family happens to live and in the case of some children - the orphanage. The child's life and his problems depend, therefore, to a considerable extent on the way the above mentioned institutions view their tasks, the way their functions are formulated by law, custom and tradition, their supplies and professional qualifications to perform tasks in the field of education and care. In the present paper two of these institutions will be discussed, i.e. the family and the kindergarten, as they are definitely the most important in the educational process. To be more precise, the subject of this paper is the role of

family and kindergarten in the process of the child's socialization.

If you consult the "International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences" (McMillan 1968, vol.14, pp.534-551), you will easily find out how many different meanings the term "socialization" has and what a variety of phenomena and processes are referred to through this term by representatives of many psychological, anthropological and sociological schools. Since there is no use to engage in complex definitional considerations, let us agree for the purposes of the present paper that socialization embraces processes in the child's development through which the individual learns to participate in the life of the community, acquires skills to behave in a group, to properly react to other people's behaviour, to elicit desirable reactions to his own behaviour, to communicate and to behave according to customs and cultural patterns. Thus, I do not differentiate between the socialization process and the "culturation" process meant as the introduction of the child to the culture of the society in which it is supposed to function. To put it briefly, socialization is, in my understanding of the term, nothing else than a transformation of the newly-born child's organism into a human person.

As I have already stated, socialization is a complex process which takes place under the influence of many forms of the adult community life, peer groups and, first of all, insti-

tutions appointed by the society and state to steer the process and provide it with contents desirable from the point of view of the society's interest as well as from that of the child who is to function in this society's life. Assumption is here made that the optimum development of the child's personality, his individuality and ability to creatively solve problems he will face in his adult life is a part of the optimum socialization process and that the creative human personality (irrespective of its definition) develops through interactions with a variety of social groups and through wide participation in a variety of cultural patterns. Out of a number of symptoms revealing the occurrence of the socialization process I will discuss some selected ones which can be found in the family and in the kindergarten.

Family and kindergarten

Educators tend to consider the family education of the child as a "natural process" or "natural education", i.e. one that happens spontaneously without being steered by pedagogical considerations. Education proper, according to them, that is the process of child's formation through systematically applied methods geared to a well defined educational ideal starts from the moment the child is subjected to influences of professional teachers (educators) functioning on the mandate of the whole society. In various societies acknowledging rights and competencies of parents runs according to various patterns. In many countries the official educational doctrine acknowledges the basic right of parents to decide on the edu-

cation of their children and allows their inspection of the educational process in kindergarten and school. In other countries there is a silent agreement on the superiority of the professional teacher. The thesis I would like to set forth in my paper is very simple, probably even banal. What I believe is that the optimum solution of children's problems in the kind rgarten period requires that parents be the first teachers of their children, have certain pedagogical preparation for this task in the field of the theory of instruction, prepare the child to enter kindergarten as the institution included in the school system and provide the child with the best preparation possible in this part of the socialization process which is their own responsibility. Therefore, we ought to work for the coordination of family, kindergarten and school education. In this respect the over-all educational concept of the kindergarten is very important, especially in these societies where it has already become a common form of getting children ready for school instruction, as it has happened in Poland. I also believe that parents ought to know what forms of education are applied in kindergartens so as to carry out their educational activity avoiding a strong turn when the child enters the kindergarten.

My thesis is based on a simple fact that even in the earliest period of life, i.e. by the age of three, the child engages in a very intense learning process in the course of which he acquires numerous skills which can decide on his kindergarten,

school and life success. Without repeating what can be found in manuals of developmental psychology, I would only like to repeat that in the prekindergarten period the child acquires rudiments of his mothertongue, the notional apparatus to identify his own self objects and people from his surounding, assimilates behavioural patterns and learns to interpret other people's behaviour, acquires basic concepts of right and wrong, learns basics of hygiene, to put it briefly - his personality undergoes serious modifications (synthetically presented by Teresa Szustrowa in "Oświata i Wychowanie" 1977, 12). This is usually a spontaneous process, as not many parents are able to steer early socialization processes in a goal-oriented way. No wonder, kindergarten educators tend to think the educational process proper is not initiated before the child enters the kindergarten system.

I also believe that family education which forms the basis for both kindergarten and school education should - to a certain extent - be geared to what happens in the kindergarten. Educational concepts of the kindergarten should, therefore, be explained to parents. That is, either kindergarten educators ought to somehow continue the family education, or parents ought to get their child ready for the kindergarten educational process. Otherwise, the passage from the family to the kindergarten will become a serious crisis in the child's life which is unavoidable whenever methods applied in the two institutions differ too strikingly. Some of the educational

sociologists are of an opinion that several kinds of crisis occur in the human life span as, for instance, passage from the family to the school system, entering the profession and retirement. But if we want to steer the child's education so as to ensure his "greatest benefit" - the cooperation of family and the kindergarten is an elementary requirement.

We can assume that there is a natural division of labour as between the family and the kindergarten, that it is desirable to preserve the family individuality, that differences between family and kindergarten influences are desirable because they facilitate enriching the children's personalities. It may be so, but on the other hand we are aware of the fact that the lack of coordination in the influence exerted by the two institutions leads to tragedy and distortion of the child's psyche. The answer then lies in the full utilization of capabilities and differences between the two institutions carried out without the tragedy of the kindergarten child. In such coordination planned and goal-oriented concept of the kindergarten, its methods and organization are extremely significant.

Kindergartens in Poland

I am sure, participants of the Congress will have a chance to get acquainted with the Polish kindergartens and their activity, their history and transformations, so in the present paper I will provide no more than condense information of the concept and role of the kindergarten in the process

of the child's socialization. Historically speaking, the Polish kindergartens sprung from the so-called infant-schools, the institutions of educational care bearing a philantropic character. In the next stage institutions appeared which were based on Froebel gardens and Montessori's infant-schools, both with a clear educational theory underlying their activity. In the inter-war period the process of kindergarten-formation was initiated within the frames of the educational system. The Act of 1932 laid the legal foundation for the preschool education development. In the schoolyear 1938/39 Poland had 1506 kindergartens embracing 74 800 children. During the World War II kindergartens which managed to survive became an element of fight for the national existence, performed their tutelar function rescueing children from hunger, from the danger of death and from denationalization.

In the People's Poland the effort of the educational authority in the period immediately after the liberation was oriented toward assisting children affected by the war, improving the living standard and caring for children in the destroyed country. Prewar kindergartens were rebuilt and new ones constructed. At the end of 1945 the kindergarten system embraced 138 000 children. During the successive years the network of kindergartens increases but at the same time the educational concepts of their activity is being worked out accompanied by kindergarten teacher training, curriculum construction and modification, research basis establishment and the creation of suppementary educational forms as, for instance, kinder-

garten groups functioning in the primary schools and the what-are-called kindergarten centres. In 1970 kindergartens embraced 500 000 children and the kindergarten centres - 109 000 children. Since 1972 the educational authorities have been engaged in a systematic increase of the kindergarten system, in linking kindergarten and school education and in stressing educational and instructional functions of the preschool institutions alongside with the tutelar ones. At present 95 per cent of the six-year-olds attend kindergartens for no less than 18 hours a week. All the children have a chance to attend the kindergarten for one year preceding their school start at the age of 7. They are subjected to medical and psychological examinations there and in case of need - directed to specialists. After such one-year care for the child, the kindergarten personnel transmits their observation to teachers of the primary school which the child will enter and with which a given kindergarten regularly co-operates.

The Polish kindergarten is designed for four age groups of children between the age of 3 and 7. Presently all the six--year-olds have been embraced by the kindergarten system (95%). About 50% of five-year-olds and about 25 per cent of three- and four-year-olds attend some kind of a kindergarten. Younger children usually receive family care with some aid provided by health service and social welfare institutions. Plans of the educational authorities state that by the year

1980 the whole population of five-year-olds and half of the population of three- and four-year-olds will be embraced by the kindergarten system. The new curricula for the kindergarten teacher training colleges have also been effected so far, according to which raising professional qualifications of teachers is being carried out. This particular trend is based on research results which reveal that preschool curricula are more easily adaptable to natural processes of the child's psychic growth than more formalized school curricula. Therefore, it seems better to prolong the child's kindergarten education and start school instruction at the age of 7, if only the kindergarten is treated as an educational institution and not merely as the institution of care. It can be stated, that in this sense the kindergarten is considered to be the basis of the Polish educational system. Before I discuss the role of the kindergarten in the socialization process according to the Polish educational concept I would like to extend on the processes which take place in the family in the stage proceding the kindergarten education.

Socialization of the child in the family

Let me start with a personal declaration. I do not share the opinion of those educators who considering the education in the family to be a "natural kind of education" assume consciously or silently its inferiority to the education in the school system, the kindergarten system included. Contrarily, to my mind, it is in the family that the basis is formed of

the whole process of socialization. It is here that certain phenomena are shaped that decide the future behaviour of an individual and that cannot be changed in the course of the kindergarten or school education. I also think that the durability of behavioural patterns acquired in the family is considerably stronger than that acquired later in school. The family socializes the child and introduces him to real life through participation in the life of parents, brothers and sisters, participation in household activities and in sloving real life problems. Education in the kindergarten or in school consists in solving play-type situations first, verbal and "school-type" problems later, while all of them are at best a good imitation of real situations.

It should also be stressed that for the whole period of school education and for many types of the educational content life in the family is a kind of test of what has been acquired in school. The problem is to steer the educational and socialization process in the family so that parents are provided with knowledge and skills to consciously fulfil their instructional functions.

I would like to draw your attention to a certain classification of the human knowledge and the process of its acquisition by the human being. In greatest simplification and condensation one can say that each of us in certain fields of life has at his disposal the common knowledge acquired unsystematically through the family, readings or conversations.

Further, in certain fields of life we have at our disposal the scientific knowledge acquired first of all in school. Finally, in other fields we dispose of the practical knowledge acquired in the course of professional or social activity. Never mind the details now, let us only notice the significance of the common knowledge in our everyday life. This is the type of knowledge transmitted by parents to their children. This is the knowledge of community coexistence, customs, ways of behaviour in everyday situations, moral knowledge, knowledge of household problems and of the life style in various social groups. That is the scope of knowledge which is extremely important but which is not the subject of the school instruction in spite of its significance for the proper social functioning. The child entering kindergarten has already acquired a considerable scope of this knowledge which forms the basis of systematic acquisition pertaining to scientific knowledge. The second important field of the family education is the child's introduction into the world of values, teaching him the criteria for evaluation, evaluation principles concerning his own self, other people, objects and events. Learning process in this field is very long and in fact lasts for the whole of the human life, but it is in the early childhood that the foundations are laid for its future course. The family education with regard to values can be purely verbal when parents speak to the child of what is right and what is wrong, but what is much more important are examples of actual adult behaviour,

attempts to imitate their activities, immediate participation in activity, work and life of the grown-ups. There is no room there for discrepancies as between the educational ideal verbally transmitted and the principles of actual behaviour, as the child acquires principles in the course of action. This real, actual life style and way of life in the family which reflect principles guiding the human behaviour are basis of the child's knowledge pertaining to principles of the community life. The significance of the family influence is revealed most conspicuously in morally endangered families when the child exposed to the influence of the family environment accepts phenomena deviated from the norm as the norm itself.

I would like to stress one more aspect of the socialization process which takes place in the family and namely the acquisition of attitudinal patterns. The child in his earliest period learns to decode attitudes of others, read intentions from the tone of voice, movements, gestures, facial expressions and ways of reacting in various situations. Thus, everything that we later in the community life consider to be the skill and ability to sympathize with the attitudes of other people and what we call empathy, intuition, ability to understand feelings and ways of thinking presented by other people is being formed as early as in the preschool period in the family environment. Immediate participation in the life of the family, its activities, troubles, problems, hopes, joys and successes helps the child to form significant ele-

ments of socialization which make it possible for him to function in the kindergarten, in school in the institution of employment and in all the fields of the social life.

This enumeration, however, superficious and simplified, points to the significance of the child's socialization in the family environment and shows what we have to take into consideration when the child enters kindergarten.

Socialization of the child in the kindergarten

The passage from the family to the kindergarten is a considerable change in the child's life and can become a serious crisis when the child is introduced into the situation where his knowledge acquired in the family and sufficient to solve family problems proves insufficient to solve his troubles connected with the functioning in the kindergarten. The child passes from family life to participation in peer groups in which his status proves completely different, he enters the organized course of activities where parents are replaced by a professional educator for whom the child is just one member of a big group.

Passage to the kindergarten is very different according to the class membership of the family from which the passage is made, according to its life style, attitude toward the children, but in the present paper we are interested in the most general problems only which are in a certain scope similar in all kinds of circumstances. The Polish programmatic and

organizational concept of the kindergarten is aware of this possibility so it tries to link its tutelar, instructional and educational functions in an integrated system of educational influence. The tutelar function consists in continuing to perform tasks regularly performed by the parents, here, however, become richer and richer as functions of this kind are linked with instructional activities and with the guidance of the child's development according to principles worked out by the developmental psychology and the preschool pedagogy. Care for the child which used to be the only task of the kindergarten when it was the institution designed to provide care for the child during the parents' professional work or during their illness is now subjected to instructional functions pertaining to knowledge that is no longer common but scientific knowledge and the socialization process itself becomes regulated according to guidelines springing from the educational ideal accepted within the frames of the Polish educational system. Instructional functions of the Polish kindergarten have been considerably modified in the recent time. Kindergartens should obviously continue the teaching of skills indispensable in the everyday life, skills that the child has already acquired in his family, but the supervised participation in a big group forms in this field a number of quite new possibilities for the steering of the socialization process. Participation in the organized play, initiated on the conscious initiative of the educator, opens more chances for new ways of instruction pertaining to social

cooperation, functioning in a group, possibilities to communicate, understanding organization and cooperation principles than does spontaneous participation in the life and work of the family.

On the same example we can easily demonstrate a new perspective on social relations that the child acquires in the kindergarten which is completely different from the family perspective in the way that the community life is governed by the impersonal order based on principles functioning irrespective of parental decisions which are liable to changes, while here the objective course of affairs has to be followed, so the child must be subjected to its requirements. To put it otherwise, the professional educator introduces the child to the rhythm of objective organization first revealed in organized plays with the set of unchangeable rules for each and later in the common activity and work. The kindergarten teacher, therefore, functions as a representative of the new social order, different from that accepted in the family, of the order which regulates behaviour of the whole kindergarten group and represents that governing the whole society. In this way it is in the kindergarten that the child discovers the organized society, the formal and objective order, the social reality which cannot be changed through whims or simple manipulations sufficient to modify parental decisions.

Instructional functions are now given considerable attention

in the Polish kindergarten. In the reform of the school system which is to take place in Poland the kindergarten is supposed to eliminate differences in the level of school readiness for the children of all types of the social environment. Its task is also to introduce the child to basic elements of the school knowledge so as to facilitate the learning process in the early primary school stage. Thus, kindergartens are included in the uniform school system and become its fundamental part. That is why the draft of the reform contains statements about the nation-wide promotion of kindergarten education and that is why kindergarten curriculum becomes a component of the whole set of the educational curricula. But kindergarten teaching processes function without formal lessons, without divisions into school classes, without rigid distinctions of the learning and leisure time, because here the education is carried out through play and the child's spontaneous activity. Research carried out in the kindergarten demonstrates that books for children can play a very important part in the course of the kindergarten education, that going through coloured books with nice illustrations, reading aloud and which appeals to the children's emotional experiences are all activities shaping the intellectual sphere of the young child. Mathematicians point out that possibilities are open to introduce new mathematics to the kindergarten, as it is not at all excluded to teach categories of mathematical thinking through play and in this manner to prepare children for the systematic learning process

in the primary school. Mathematicians (Zofia Krygowska in: "Oświata i Wychowanie 12) give strong emphasis to the significance of the early introduction of the child to the world of thinking through "abstract models in various problem situations".

Stressing instructional and educational functions stronger than it used to happen in the years before leads automatically to statements of the increasing significance ascribed to kindergarten teacher training and to research activity oriented toward problems of the kindergarten pedagogy.

Huge effort has been undertaken in Poland to provide qualified personnel for the kindergarten education. In all the voivodships systems of kindergarten teacher training have been established. Teachers are trained in kindergarten education colleges in a six-year cycle based on the eight-year primary school and in a two-year cycle based on the four-year secondary school. Alongside with day studies, extramural and evening studies have been established and extended. A considerable number of practising kindergarten teachers started their in-service academic studies which is a phenomenon welcome by the educational authorities. In the course of the teacher training it is stressed that teachers ought to be able to provide manysided educational influence for the child, i.e. they ought to care for their health, steer teaching and educational processes, prepare children for social life, impart moral principles, form technical skills and introduce to the

world of aesthetic values. The teachers who are already employed in kindergartens have been embraced by the in-service training connected with the change of the kindergarten functions and its having become part of the national school system.

Problems to be solved

Several conclusions can be drawn from the above review of selected problems connected with the socialization processes in the family and in the kindergarten. Some of them I would like to present in the final part of my paper. The first conclusion pertains to the mutual complementarity of family and kindergarten functions in the process of introducing the child to the community life and in the course of his personality formation. When translated into the language of praxis the conclusion calls for a number of activities that should be initiated in this field. First of all it seems that parents as the first teachers in the child's life should receive - in the school system and then in some from of the permanent education system - elements of pedagogical knowledge that would increase the efficiency and value of their instructional activities. This problem has been posed many times and in consequence the Pol sh schooling like school systems in many other countries has already introduced elements of knowledge for the future parents into the secondary school curriculum. These are, however, no more than just the beginnings.

The problem has several aspects. On the one hand, the question is of the parents' ability to steer their child's devel-

opment, care for his health, provide him with knowledge indispensable for the social functioning so that the family education could become something more than a spontaneous, natural process and come closer to more systematic instructional processes. On the other hand, however, the question is of the parents' becoming kindergarten, primary and secondary teachers' partners in guiding the systematic educational process. Many researchers point out to a decrease in the efficiency and value of numerous school systems in the contemporary world and see the possibility to counteract this undesirable trend through a closer cooperation with the family and other educational institutions functioning in the society with the main line of the school system. In the socialization process such a cooperation is completely indispensable. The kindergarten cannot function properly ignoring what has been attained in this field by the family and cannot start the educational process from scratch, neglecting what the family has been doing for the former years without bringing about considerable damages in the child's psyche.

Both psychological and sociological researches demonstrate that socialization is a continuous process cumulating influences of many institutions and forms of the community life in which the child participates and that harmony and complementarity of these influences is an important factor in the child's development. In the kindergarten history a trend can be noticed which in a very simplified way can be demonstrated as a transformation of the kindergarten family into the first

year of school instruction. The point is in preserving a number of elements characteristic of the family education so that no conflicts are brought about between the systems of family values and the systems of activities resulting from the necessities of school instruction.

This requires huge efforts in the field of kindergarten teacher training. Kindergarten educators ought to possess knowledge of socialization processes in the family, the knowledge of families which send their children to the kindergarten, they ought to understand mechanisms of family education, even if they themselves are not parents. This, however, requires aid provided for the teachers by the research activity on the family and kindergarten education, research which, to my mind, is not yet fully developed. And here comes my final conclusion pertaining to the growth of such research on the comparative international scale.

PRELIM 9 ww.el.Bobrowska 16/20
Zam.626/77 nakład 200